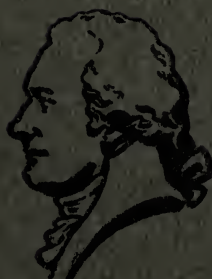


# THE ART OF SALESMANSHIP



**ALEXANDER  
HAMILTON  
INSTITUTE**



# THE ART OF SALESMANSHIP

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By HERBERT F. DEBOWER

Vice-President of the Alexander Hamilton Institute

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One of a Series of Lectures Especially Prepared  
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# HERBERT F. DEBOWER.

Mr. DeBower is Vice-President of the Alexander Hamilton Institute, in charge of all selling activities. His business life has been devoted almost wholly to study of selling methods and problems, and he is therefore particularly qualified to handle the important subject of "The Art of Salesmanship." This Lecture is based upon an address to the students of the School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance of New York University.

Mr. DeBower was born March 11, 1874, on a farm in the town of Vienna, Dane County, Wisconsin. His parents were among the earliest pioneer settlers in that section of the State. His boyhood was spent on his parents' farm, and there he built up the sturdy physique and sound health, which he has since enjoyed.

His early education was obtained in the country public school near his home, and in the High School of Lodi, Wisconsin. From the High School he went to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he took the law course and graduated with the degree of LL.B. in 1896. Mr. DeBower's chief interest at the University, apart from his studies, was in debating, and in his senior year he won a place as one of the Law School joint debaters. He was also one of the few men in the University

Rev. H. A. M. S.



selected to stump the State in the political campaign of 1896.

After graduation Mr. DeBower, as he has himself expressed it, "indulged in the luxury of practising law." He met with the same difficulties as most young lawyers, and after two years determined to drop the law for the time being and enter business. It was a decision which he has never had occasion to regret.

Even during his school and university days Mr. DeBower was engaged in selling, beginning with the low-priced specialties which student salesmen usually handle, and gradually advancing to more difficult propositions. During the three years 1898-1901 he represented a well-known firm of law book publishers and sold one of the standard encyclopaedias of law. In this hard school he learned thoroughly the essentials of salesmanship, which he sets forth in this Lecture. From 1901 to 1904 he was engaged as sales manager, and later as one of the corporate officers of a general publishing concern. This position, however, did not satisfy him, and in 1904 he organized the DeBower-Elliott Company of Chicago, of which he has since been President. The company has grown from a comparatively small beginning until it has become a large and well-established publishing concern. In 1911 he gave up the active management of the DeBower-Elliott Company in order to accept the Vice-Presidency of the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

# The Art of Salesmanship

BY HERBERT F. DEBOWER

To sell, as defined by the Standard dictionary, is "to transfer property to another or contract to do so for a valuable consideration, especially money." As generally understood in the commercial world, however, the transaction should represent a financial profit to the seller. It is usually an easy matter to give away goods or to sell "below cost." The market value of a commodity is its production cost, plus the marketing expense, plus a fair margin of profit. Selling as a legitimate phase of commerce is getting the market value for a commodity.

## Factors in Every Sale

The three factors in every sale are, the commodity, the seller and the buyer. The commodity must be designed to serve some purpose, useful, decorative or entertaining, and it must have intrinsic value. The seller must create a demand for his commodity, price it within the reach of those to whom it appeals, and that price must admit of a fair profit on the transaction. The buyer must be convinced of his need for the commodity for individual use, for gift or for re-sale, he must be satisfied that the price is reasonable and he must be able to pay on the terms prescribed by the seller.

## Four Steps in a Sale

The four acknowledged steps in the consummation of any sale are, attention, interest, desire and close. The simplest form, from the standpoint of the person who actually effects the sale, is that which relieves him of getting attention, arousing interest and creating desire. Persons occupying such positions are usually not considered salesmen. An illustration of this form of selling is that of a clerk back of a counter who supplies the mere request of a customer. The next form is where only attention has been secured and interest aroused. An illustration of this form is where you walk into a store and are attracted by the appearance of some commodity, and a clerk creates desire and closes the sale. The next and more intricate form is where only attention has previously been secured. An illustration of this is where a salesman follows up his regular trade. As soon as he branches out and begins building up new trade he is taking all four steps and practicing the most intricate form of salesmanship.

## Two Divisions of Selling

Selling may be divided into two divisions, first, where the buyer seeks the seller, and second, where the seller seeks the buyer. In the first instance the seller is required to take only one or, at most, two of the steps in salesmanship. In the second instance the seller usually takes all four steps, with such assistance as may have been previously extended in attracting attention to, and possibly arousing interest in, the commodity.



This may be designated as the difference between an order taker and a salesman. The former merely fills an existing want while the latter creates a new want and fills it by taking the order.

### Creative Selling

The rapid and varied production of marketable materials with the ensuing competition has forced creative selling to the front. The "bargain counter" method of sale has gradually given way to the sale based upon merit, value and special features. Even the producers of what are known as staple lines are adding distinctive features to put their commodities in the class of specialties. For instance, crackers were once sold by the barrel; now they are sold in sealed packages. The method of sealing the package is a distinctive feature, adding value to the commodity. A suit of clothes was formerly sold as a mere suit of clothes; now it is sold as a suit plus the mark of the maker—a distinguishing feature adding value to the commodity.

Advertising, the handmaiden of salesmanship, is resorted to largely to promote the sale of specialties. Newspaper and magazine advertising consists principally in exploiting commodities that come within that class. While some of it aims at direct sales, most of it is merely for the purpose of helping the salesman to take later the four steps just mentioned with the prospective buyer. Direct circularizing is also resorted to, to accomplish the same purpose.

There was a time when the saying, "Salesmen are born, not made," was taken seriously. At the

present time this expresses only about one-half the truth. Those responsible for the production of commodities found personal solicitation the most important and potent factor in solving the problem of distribution and, since there were not enough men born to the calling, it became necessary to create salesmen. In the process of creation a science was developed, and in the application of that science we have the "Art of Salesmanship."

### Salesmanship as a Calling

The practice of the calling offers many advantages that are not to be found in other occupations. Of these advantages perhaps the most important is that of remuneration. It is an unchallenged fact that no line of commercial activity offers a more inviting field for acquiring a competence than that of salesmanship. A capital of \$100,000.00, invested in business or drawing 5 % interest, is less remunerative than the earning capacity of a capable salesman. In addition to this, comparatively little preparatory effort is necessary to make a start, no financial capital is required, the vocation is pleasant and healthful, and it usually satisfies to a certain extent the "wanderlust" that is bred in the bone.

The future possibilities of the profession are equally alluring. It not only affords the largest immediate financial returns, but it is the surest and quickest way to reach important executive positions. Many men who now rank as the heads of gigantic business enterprises reached those positions through the selling end of the business.

There is no work better adapted to give a man knowledge of human nature, self-reliance and instant control over all his faculties. Thousands of men of ability, high character and standing are enlisted in the service.

But the demand for men who can sell is insistent and constant. There has never been an over-supply. Note the column after column of "Salesmen Wanted" in the classified sections of the newspapers and magazines. Only occasionally do you see in "Situations Wanted" the advertisement of a high grade salesman seeking a position. And why is it, with such advantages and possibilities, we do not have an over-supply? The answer is, that comparatively few of the large number who would like to follow the calling can measure up to the requirements. A salesman who can produce business in paying quantities is an asset. A salesman who cannot is a liability. No firm will knowingly take on or continue a liability.

### Natural Qualifications

The essential qualifications of successful salesmanship may be logically divided into two classes: natural and acquired. I should name the natural qualifications as, native ability, good health, pleasing personality, honesty, ambition and courage. While it may be said that these qualities are largely inherent, it is nevertheless true that they are subject to development and may even be attained, in a measure at least, through training, determined effort and experience.

Native ability is an inherent quality which

makes one man naturally smart, another naturally dull, one man quick-witted, and another slow-witted or with no wit at all. It includes aptitude—the faculty to “catch on.” It includes initiative—the ability to originate, to plan, to get ahead. It includes adaptability—the power to fit oneself into changing environments and conditions. It includes tact, that wonderful quality belonging to the sixth sense, the ready power of instantly appreciating and doing what is required by circumstances. These are some of the things that go to make up native ability. It may be very greatly developed through training, study and associations.

### Prime Condition

A salesman more than almost anyone else requires a good strong healthy mind and body. He cannot expect to influence strong and healthy people unless he himself is in prime condition both mentally and physically. Moreover, his arduous duties require a large daily supply of strength and vitality. Once blessed with health one can do much to retain it or even to improve health. Sheldon says, “If we think right, eat right, breathe right and live right, we will be all right physically.” Eating, drinking and carousing with customers was once part of a salesman’s duties. It is now generally conceded that more can be accomplished by an appeal to the intellect than by an appeal to the stomach. The vocation, however, offers many temptations which, if indulged in, undermine health, and a salesman’s continued success depends upon his power to resist such temptations.

## Personality

A pleasing personality is that indefinable something that makes the presence of one person welcome and the presence of another person unwelcome. It is that quality which characterizes and distinguishes one person from another, not by his stature, nor by the way his features are molded, but by his expression, actions and manner. Without this qualification, the salesman can make but little progress, with it he can accomplish wonders. A salesman should give careful attention to his personal appearance, such as care of the teeth, a hair cut, shave, polish, clean linen and neat apparel. These, together with a frank open countenance, clear eyes, clean thoughts and good manners, go a long way in the development of a pleasing personality.

## Ambition

Ambition is a prime requisite of salesmanship. Emerson might well have had in mind a class of prospective salesmen when he said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." It means aim high. The reason some men achieve so little is because they attempt so little. The more one accomplishes, the more one becomes capable of accomplishing. A successful salesman should be imbued with a steadfast purpose to achieve something worth while. The spur of ambition should continually urge him forward. If he is filled with contentment, indifference and indolence, he will be a dismal failure. This quality, while inherent, may also be developed and even, in a measure, acquired through determination and will.



## Honesty

As a business proposition, it pays to be honest—with oneself, with one's firm and with one's customer. In that way only will the salesman be able to retain his self-respect, the confidence and esteem of the firm he represents and of the people with whom he deals. There are salesmen who are known as "one trippers." They are the men who are not entirely honest in some particular. They make one trip through a certain territory and are not able to go back. Then there are other salesmen who are known as "repeaters." They are the men who can go over their territory again and again and on each trip gather an increasing host of friends for themselves and their firm.

## Courage

It takes courage to be honest under all circumstances, to relentlessly apply the spur of ambition, to learn to look the tenth man in the face with a smile after having failed to secure an order from any of the preceding nine, to refrain from over-indulgence that means a break-down in health, to refuse to let the mentality slumber during waking hours. It is an important qualification. Courage in this connection is synonymous with a determined will—a will akin to audacity, that is fearless almost to the verge of recklessness, that will not yield to seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Dr. Gunsaulus says, "Success in any undertaking is never gained until it has many times been picked up for dead on life's battle field. Every grey hair in the head of age represents a sigh; every law on

our statute books represents midnight candles burned low; every painting drawn upon canvas is an intimation of the toil and heart throbs of the artist; and every stream that goes singing to the sea tells a story of the rocks over which it passed."

### Acquired Qualifications

The natural qualifications disbar some from the practice of the profession. Measuring men from the standpoint of acquired qualifications—those which almost every normal man is capable of attaining—the real process of development begins. I should name the essential acquired qualifications as, concentration, confidence, enthusiasm, earnestness, industry, preparation, observation and self-analysis.

Singleness of purpose is a distinguishing characteristic of success. Most propositions are big enough and of sufficient importance to justify a salesman's entire time and attention, and only by freely giving both can he reach the highest degree of efficiency. Many men could reach at least a fair measure of success, if they would develop the power of continuous concentration. Because they do not develop that power, they continue to sell their services for just enough to eke out an existence. On this subject the late David Graham Phillips, a close student of human nature, said, "Most of us cannot concentrate at all; any slight distraction suffices to disrupt and destroy the whole train of thought. A good many can concentrate for a few hours, for a week or so, for two or three months. But there comes a small achievement and it satisfies, or a small discouragement and it

disheartens. Only to the rare few is given the power to concentrate steadily, year in and year out, through good and evil event or report."

### Confidence Three Ways

A salesman should have confidence three ways, in himself, in his firm and in his proposition. Before a sale can be made the prospective buyer must be imbued with confidence in the salesman, in the firm and in the proposition. To inspire that confidence in others, the salesman must first possess it himself. Success, therefore, is in proportion to the salesman's estimate of his own ability, his belief in the firm he represents, and his faith in the proposition. Careful distinction should be made between confidence and conceit. Conceit is rooted in ignorance and a misapprehension of the facts. It believes it can, but it really cannot. Confidence is intelligent faith based on facts. It believes it can and the results demonstrate the truth of that belief.

### Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is the life of the interview. The prospective buyer must have it in some degree, either expressed or suppressed, or there will be no sale. This enthusiasm on the buyer's part will not come of its own accord, but is merely the reflection of the salesman's enthusiasm. The salesman acquires it as the natural result of a thorough knowledge of, and a belief in, the merits and value of the commodity. He must adapt himself to his work and learn to like it. He must be in love with it.

Congenial work is merely pleasure. Work that is not congenial is drudgery, and in performing drudgery there can be no enthusiasm.

### **Earnestness**

Earnestness is a quality closely akin to that of enthusiasm. It means to be zealous, to be determined, ardent in spirit and speech. The word embodies a large element of success in any line of human endeavor. John D. Rockefeller says, "If you are in earnest to the innermost fibre of your body, there is no power that can hold you back from the object you strive to attain." No man has ever achieved success, which is traceable to his own endeavors, who has not been the embodiment of that word. Earnestness should not be confounded with seriousness. A man may smile and still be earnest. It is this quality that gives to everything you say a convincing ring.

### **Application**

The main difference between success and failure is found in the degree of application. A man with fair intelligence and great energy is much more likely to succeed than a man with greater intelligence and little energy. There is, perhaps, no profession in the world where this is more apparent than in salesmanship. Therefore, an important requisite in selling goods is capacity and willingness for hard work. It takes genius to sell anything, and genius is now defined as 2% inspiration and 98% perspiration. One of the principal causes of failure is the fact that some salesmen who

possess the natural qualifications to a marked degree have succeeded by working short hours. In the minds of the unknowing this has created the impression that a selling position is a sinecure, comparing favorably with the position of a bank president whose hours are supposed to be from ten to three. Salesmen should believe, and have the good sense to appreciate, that success must not be expected except as a return for value expended in the way of time and effort. It is easy to find excuses for not working, and since the salesman is to a large extent his own master, it requires determination and will power to resist the temptation to be idle.

### Preparedness

Albert J. Beveridge who was once a salesman, says, "Preparedness is the secret of most successes in this world; fate seldom makes league with the unequipped." To succeed in selling anything, the salesman must first master the details of his proposition. He must have his selling points marshalled and under full control, and he must be prepared to answer any questions or objections that may arise. The fact that a salesman may start with a little preparation does not mean that his study ceases when he begins work, any more than one would expect a lawyer to stop reading law when he started practice. Knowledge of goods and selling points does not come by intuition or inspiration. It comes by study and application.

### Observation

A salesman should acquire the power of observation. This is the faculty that enables him to read



the signals that are flashed at him in various ways. He must make a quick mental note of the surroundings, the appearance and the condition in which he finds the prospect to determine whether the circumstances are auspicious for a favorable approach. He should note the tone of the voice, expression of the eye, and the general bearing, as these things indicate to him what should be his method of procedure. He must be quick to observe and take advantage of the all important psychological moment when the prospective buyer has reached a favorable decision. A sale is frequently directly traceable to the fact that an observing salesman discovered some hobby of the prospective buyer which immediately created a bond of mutual interest. The Chicago manager of the Six Little Tailors aptly remarks, "If you can learn what a man's business is while trying to sell him a suit of clothes and you show an interest in him by saying something nice about his business, you can generally get him to take an interest in what you have to say about your own business."

### Self-Analysis

Self-analysis, or introspection, is the qualification that enables the salesman to sit down at night and dissect himself. This may be termed the success building habit—the habit of looking into one's mind to discover and eradicate those things that tend to produce failure and to discover and develop those things that tend to produce success. Self-praise is looking backward; self-criticism is looking forward. The man who is looking back-

ward never sees anything until it has passed by. Some men have such a high regard for themselves that they are incapable of self-analysis or self-criticism. Such men should studiously avoid salesmanship. They may have all the other essential qualities, but their failure to develop this quality makes it impossible to analyze themselves and adjust the other qualities so they will respond in the right degree.

### Real Salesmen and Near Salesmen

It is the universal report of firms employing salesmen that comparatively few of the men who seek selling positions have the right conception of the requirements, and that even those who have a fair conception have made little or no effort to measure up to those requirements. The distinction between a real salesman—one who possesses the essential qualifications, and the near salesman—one who possesses only some of the qualifications, and those only to a limited extent—is the difference between the big money makers and those who barely make enough to get along. At the present time the near salesmen greatly outnumber the real salesmen. The head of a large Chicago firm who has charge of the sales organization was recently asked how many salesmen they had on the road. He replied, "We have five." "Why, I thought," said the interviewer, "that you had at least one hundred men on the road." "We have over one hundred men on the road, but only five salesmen. The others are doing only enough to justify the hope that they will eventually graduate as salesmen."

## Factors in Making a Connection

From the salesman's standpoint there are six factors that should be considered in making a connection with a firm; the personnel and financial standing of the firm: the proposition, the salesman's adaptability to the proposition, the selling methods, the territory and the compensation.

A salesman should be able to place absolute confidence in, not only the integrity, but also the ability of his firm. While it is important to know that the firm is financially responsible, it is even more important to be satisfied with the personnel of the men who constitute the firm. There are many new firms with comparatively small capital, organized, however, by capable men who are enterprising and who thoroughly understand the field in which they are engaged. A salesman has a much better opportunity to succeed with such a firm than he has with a firm that is not progressive or that has inefficient men at the head of it, even though that firm may have a very high financial rating.

### The Proposition

The next factor entering into his engagement is an examination of the proposition itself. Is it built on the merit plan, will it deliver, give satisfaction and make friends? If the thing you have to sell possesses real merit and value, it offers better money making possibilities than something that does not possess this quality, and since there are not enough real salesmen even to market what people need, want and can use to advantage, it is to

the interest of such men, if for no other than financial reasons, to avoid fake and scheme enterprises. It is an acknowledged fact that, to be successful, a salesman must first sell himself—and he must stay sold. Unless he starts out with faith in his proposition, his sales will be small, and, if he starts out with faith, the minute he begins to lose it, his sales will begin to fall off. What previous purchasers of the proposition have to say about it will help in a large measure to answer this important question of merit and value.

### Selling Methods

The proposition may be in its experimental stages and then the selling methods are in their experimental stages. In that event, the salesman must depend upon his own ability and experience, and his confidence in the ability and experience of the firm, to develop satisfactory methods. If the proposition has passed beyond its experimental stages, the selling methods are, undoubtedly, well established and the efficacy of those selling methods can then be determined by an examination of the records of the members of the present sales organization. The salesman should satisfy himself not only that the selling methods are such as he approves, but also that he has the ability to successfully put them in operation. Some of the questions that should be answered in this connection are: To whom does the proposition appeal? What co-operation or help is extended by the firm? Does the firm give exclusive territory rights, etc.?

## Adaptability

The next question to determine is the salesman's adaptability to the proposition. Unless the proposition is one for which the salesman has a natural liking and can become interested in and enthusiastic over, it will not be to the advantage of himself and the firm to make a connection. The commodity, for instance, might be a mechanical device and, while a most excellent article and a money maker for some salesmen, the applicant might not care to handle it because he does not have a mechanical turn of mind or because he prefers not to call on the class of people to whom it appeals. It might, for instance, be something along educational lines particularly suited to him because he has a liking for that sort of work and because he prefers to call on the highly intelligent, thinking class of people to whom it appeals.

## Territory

While the matter of territory should be left, in a general way, to the discretion and judgment of the firm, a salesman may have some particular reason for locating in a certain part of the country, or for wanting city territory or country territory. From a business producing standpoint, one territory is usually about as good as another. Some men, who have not studied the matter closely, think virgin territory is necessary for success. It is a pretty well established fact that with a meritorious proposition the best territory for business is that which has proved the most fruitful in the past.



## Compensation

An important consideration from the standpoint of the salesman is compensation. Most firms in whom the salesman can place confidence are always willing to pay a fair price for actual results. They realize that in this way only can they permanently retain the services of high grade men. In considering the compensation, the salesman should remember what Hugh Chalmers says, "A man's compensation should be made up of two parts until he is fifty years of age. He should say to himself when considering employment—what can I earn, and next put the letter L before earn and ask, what can I learn?" Working on a commission basis is the best plan, if that can be arranged. It forces the development of the essential qualifications. The commission basis makes the salesman a partner in the firm, the firm putting in their capital, experience and their proposition against the salesman's time, energy and experience.

## Preparatory Work

Having made a satisfactory connection, the salesman begins his special preparatory work which consists of acquiring a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the thing to be sold, a knowledge and facility in the use of each piece of the selling equipment, receiving such office training and field demonstration as the firm supplies, and familiarizing himself with the instructions and requirements of the firm.

Failure is often due to the fact that the salesman does not have a comprehensive and intelligent

understanding of just what his proposition is, what it will do and why the people on whom he calls should become purchasers. Some men with experience are inclined to assume the "know it all" attitude, unwilling to do the preparatory work and to receive the office and field training. These "know it all" men are the ones who keep the ranks of the "has beens" well filled. Most firms have considerable literature designed to give the salesman a clear and comprehensive understanding regarding their proposition and the special advantageous features. Frequently this information is supplied in the shape of a definite course of study. The salesman should realize that the firm has, perhaps, spent years in the development of the proposition and that this literature represents their crystallized thoughts on the subject. All of this literature should be read carefully and thoughtfully and re-read if necessary two, three or a dozen times until it is mastered. It is highly advisable to make notes as the reading progresses and a review of those notes will help to fix in one's mind the salient features. Every point that the salesman does not clearly understand should be taken up with the man who directs the sales organization. A salesman who asks questions shows an inquiring turn of mind—he wants to know—he is on the road that leads to success. The man who is not a student to this extent can never hope to be a real salesman.

### Handling Equipment

The equipment is the collection of tools with which the salesman does his work. He must ac-

quire through intimate knowledge an ease and facility in the use of these tools. Most firms have learned from experience the best arrangement of their equipment, and the salesman should practise laying out each piece and replacing it until he has thoroughly mastered this physical part of his work. "A place for everything and everything in its place," applies especially in the matter of equipment. An order is often won or lost in a moment's time. The search for a certain piece of the equipment, even though that search is only of a second's duration, may yet be sufficient to break the connection with the prospective buyer and result in the loss of an order. The equipment should be kept in the pink of condition. Whenever it becomes soiled, mutilated or in any way below standard, it should be replaced by a fresh supply. The prospective buyer unconsciously receives his impression of the proposition from the samples he is shown. He expects the samples to be equal, if not superior, to the goods themselves. Some salesmen, even with extensive experience, do not fully realize what this means in the way of getting business. Otherwise they would give more attention to keeping their equipment in a condition that invites inspection.

### Special Training

Live progressive firms usually insist upon special office or field training. Territory is capital and it is now recognized as wanton waste of such capital to put men out without special training. This training should be as conscientiously accepted by the salesman as it is conscientiously given by the

firm and, even though the salesman has had previous experience in the same line of work, he should still be willing to be a student and learn all there is to learn from the theoretical office training and practical field demonstration. The man who conducts this office training is usually an experienced and capable salesman who in addition, understands the art of imparting knowledge to others. The demonstrator is usually the "star" salesman, capable of getting business under the most adverse circumstances in any section of the country. He is a man who averages a large percentage of sales out of his interviews, and this gives the man who is receiving the demonstration an opportunity of seeing the effect of the various selling arguments. He learns to value at their true worth adeptness and versatility in salesmanship.

The salesman should make a note of the oral instructions and should study carefully the written instructions of his firm and carry out those instructions to the letter. It may be safely presumed that the firm has good and sufficient reasons for requiring the performance of certain duties from their salesmen, even if some of the instructions seem unreasonable or some of the work required unnecessary. An inquiry will usually elicit from the firm an explanation that is entirely satisfactory to any reasonable business man. Many otherwise good salesmen have lost favor with their firms because they were careless in making out their reports or in the performance of some of the minor details. Many mediocre salesmen have received advancement, not because of their ability to do a large volume of business, but because they have

conscientiously and punctually attended to the little details requested by their firms. The salesman of to-day should be a good business man as well as a good salesman, and the details of his work should be attended to in an orderly, systematic and business-like way. The history of many failures in the selling field, as in the business field, can be told in three words, "lack of detail."

### Friendship and Co-operation

The first concern of a salesman when opening a territory is the obtaining of local influence, co-operation and friendship. Unless the firm has already supplied him with the information, the salesman should take enough time before actually presenting his proposition to ascertain who are the most important and influential men in the community and, if those men are prospective buyers or even if their endorsement would be helpful, they should be seen first with the primary object of getting their co-operation and friendship and, if possible, their business. This requires some original thinking, planning and executing. It, therefore, cannot be done very well by a man who has mental inertia—too lazy to think. Men are required who are capable of doing both head work and foot work.

### The Salesman's Attitude

The attitude of the salesman should be that of "courtesy without condescension, affability without familiarity, simplicity without snide and confidence without nerve." The first impression the



prospective buyer receives is from the attitude of the salesman; it should be a favorable impression. He should be composed and indicate by his manner that his business is of sufficient importance to demand the time and attention of the prospective buyer. This puts his call on a business basis and not as an intrusion.

The manner of introduction depends almost entirely upon circumstances and must to a large extent be left to the tact and ingenuity of the salesman. It also depends to some extent upon the customs and habits of the people in the salesman's territory. For instance, in a large city many prospective buyers would think a salesman forward if he offered to shake hands, whereas in the rural districts he might be considered uncivil if he neglected to do so. A business card is of little value as a means of introduction. If the salesman attempts to use his card for that purpose, he loses the vital opportunity of impressing the prospective buyer with his personality. The "back slapping," "hail fellow well met," "have a cigar," or "have a drink," salesman has very little, if any, excuse for further existence. The dignified and courteous salesman has put him out of business.

It is seldom, if ever, advisable to force an interview. If a man is actually too busy to listen, it is to the salesman's advantage to excuse himself and call again. He should, however, be sure that the prospective buyer's "too busy" reason is not merely an excuse. The reception accorded a salesman seeking an interview is sometimes not very encouraging. In fact, it is frequently very discouraging. There exists a feeling among some men

that all salesmen are more or less of a nuisance. One may be sure that whoever assumes that attitude is unfair and unjust. The salesman who has a meritorious proposition is worthy of the highest measure of respect and courtesy, first because he is a gentleman, second because he is a business man, and third because he is performing a most important and vital function in this age of highly specialized commercialism.

### **Attention and Interest**

The natural inclination is to say "no" when one is approached to buy anything. Some motive must, therefore, be aroused in the mind of the prospective buyer that will cause him to concentrate his thoughts on what the salesman has to say. This attention can be secured more quickly through curiosity than any other means. The preliminary remarks of the successful salesman frequently have that object in view. He is careful, however, not wholly to satisfy that curiosity and by this means continues to hold the attention of the prospective buyer. It is seldom, if ever, advisable for the salesman to show his equipment or samples until he has secured undivided and favorable attention.

Interest should be created by a brief general description of the commodity. The description should be impressive, but care must be exercised not to overstate a single fact. Any slight exaggeration at this stage will immediately arouse suspicion and destroy confidence which is necessary to the consummation of the sale. If the salesman

has any startling statements to make, they should be reserved until he has established his reputation for truth and veracity. This is where the salesman makes his strong appeal to reason. An eminent authority says, "The trained salesman knows when he has struck a reciprocal chord in his prospective buyer, just as an orator or actor knows he has pleased his audience even before the applause begins."

### Arousing Desire

No matter what a salesman has to sell there are, undoubtedly, some people who want it and are waiting for a chance to buy. He will probably run across a few, but there are not enough of that class to pay a house to keep a man on the road hunting for those who are ready to give their orders. Someone has said, "Selling goods is not like eating—to satisfy an appetite—but a good salesman is like a good cook; he can create an appetite if the prospective buyer is not hungry." Therefore, there should be only one question in the mind of the prospective buyer from the time when his interest is aroused until the order is closed, and that one question from beginning to end is, "Can I afford to spend the money for the value and advantages offered?" The affirmative answer to that question causes the prospective buyer to part with his money and acquire the proposition. A salesman should never indicate that he has any financial interest at stake in the transaction, nor should that be put forward as a reason for buying. The moment he does the question, "Can I afford to spend the money for the value and advantages

offered?" is supplanted by the question, "Can I afford to spend the money to assist this man?" The benevolent class is about as small as the class that is looking for a chance to buy.

### Securing Conviction

This is the place for "sledge hammer" arguments—reasons for buying—the arguments must be convincing and each argument must be clinched. It is better to make one point and make it effectively—drive it home—than it is to make a dozen points ineffectively. The majority of sales are made on a single argument. It is not usually necessary for a salesman to exhaust his entire stock of arguments to make a sale.

The prospective buyer must be convinced that he wants the thing offered for sale more than he wants the money it takes to get it. On the one hand, is the commodity of which he knows only what the salesman has told him; on the other hand, is the money it takes to get that commodity. The value of the money is a known quantity. The value of the commodity is just what the salesman has convinced the prospective buyer it is worth. It must become in the prospective buyer's mind of more value than the money, and when that psychological moment arrives, it is time for the signature. The sale is made and the exchange is effected.

The presentation should be made in short, concise and clean-cut sentences. Long and involved sentences should be carefully avoided, as should also the use of unnecessarily large words. Whenever it is possible to do so, words with soft conso-

nants should be used in preference to words with harsh consonants. This rule is followed by orators and it is equally important for salesmen to follow it. Slang phrases and expressions should seldom, if ever, be used. It lessens the dignity of the salesman in the eyes of the prospective buyer. In "Lyrics of a Golden Age," we find this bit of sound advice:

"The nearer to the practical men keep—  
The less they deal in vague and abstract things—  
The less they deal in huge mysterious words,  
The mightier is their power."

There is always one best way of saying anything, and a salesman should learn that way, but the impression should never be conveyed that he is delivering a "cut and dried" speech. He should carefully consider every statement he intends making and, when it is made, determine the effect it has upon the prospective buyer. A statement may sound pleasing and convincing to the salesman, but it may not sound pleasing and convincing to the man to whom it is made. That is the test. He must get the viewpoint of the prospective buyer. This principle might with profit be more generally recognized. Reiteration of a strong point is always permissible, but a salesman should have sufficient regard for his prospective buyer's time, even if not for his own, never to engage in random conversation or "small talk."

### The Positive Suggestion

Positive suggestions are a powerful influence in effecting sales. "Isn't this a distinctly practical



course?" is a positive suggestion which will naturally elicit an affirmative answer. "Do you think this a distinctly practical course?" is neutral and may be answered either in the affirmative or negative. Questions even in that form should be avoided. "You don't think this a practical course?" is a negative suggestion and will naturally elicit a negative response. The law of positive suggestion should be used throughout the interview to get the prospective buyer to agree with the salesman's arguments and conclusions.

### Anticipating Objections

The best way to overcome an objection is to anticipate it. For instance, a salesman may find a number of people raising the objection, "Haven't the time." He can anticipate that objection and say early in the presentation, "This proposition is especially designed for the busy man—like yourself—who can spare only a few moments occasionally from his many duties." However, even the best salesmen oftentimes are confronted with objections. When an objection is made, the salesman should meet it frankly and dispose of it then and there. By that method only can he hope to retain the confidence of the prospective buyer. Brevity is something that can and should be cultivated in answering objections. In this connection I quote Josh Billings as follows: "I don't care how much a man talks on a subject, if he only says it in a few words." A salesman who spends much time answering objections has little time left to make a presentation of his real selling arguments.

## Price and Terms

The price, while an important factor, is something that should not be discussed until the salesman is ready to close the order. It is a mistake to give a short general talk on his proposition and then spend the rest of the time trying to convince the prospective buyer that he can afford something he does not want. On the other hand, if the prospective buyer wants the commodity and the price is reasonable, it will not require much persuasion to convince him of that fact.

The terms of payment are a matter that should be determined after the prospective buyer wants the commodity and is convinced that the price is reasonable. Many specialties are now sold on the installment plan and some salesmen make the mistake of trying to convince the prospective buyer that he should sign an order because the price is cheap and the terms of payment are liberal. Such business, even if secured, is undesirable, because the buyer has not been convinced he needs the commodity, wants it and can use it. He is likely to cancel before the salesman can get the order to the firm, and even though the order is filled, it never becomes a satisfactory account.

## Quality of Business

The quality of business is of as great importance as quantity. Salesmen should learn to discriminate between good and bad orders and, if there is any doubt, the order should be carefully investigated before being forwarded to the firm. Some salesmen build up such a reputation in this respect

that their business is O. K.'d without investigation. The business of other salesmen is questioned, whether it is good or bad, because the firm has learned from experience that the reports accompanying the business are not such as can be safely relied upon. A good rule to follow in this connection is to assume that the firm does not want an order which the salesman himself would not care to accept if the order were his and his money were at stake.

### Competition

Every meritorious proposition is bound to have some competition. But a salesman is hurt more by the fear of competition than by competition itself. Business in almost any line creates a market for more business in that line. The development of the automobile business during the last ten years is a good illustration to prove this statement. It is advisable not to do much talking about competitors. The prospective buyer will be influenced by what the salesman has to say about his commodity, not by what he has to say about his competitors. If the prospective buyer himself brings up the matter, then and then only, should the salesman indulge in comparison.

### Return Calls

Requests to leave literature or to call back, thus giving the prospective buyer time to think it over, come from two classes, the ultra-conservative class who really mean what they say and the insincere class who have no intention of thinking it over but who use this polite method of turning

down the proposition. A salesman should be able to discriminate between these two classes and not waste his time making return calls on the insincere class. A new salesman often gets a mistaken impression that he is working up business for his firm by getting a long list of prospects. There is a decided difference between a signed order and an indefinite promise. Keen discernment and good judgment must be used in agreeing to call back; otherwise the salesman will soon find himself chasing rainbows.

### Forget the Failures

"Nothing succeeds like success." Everyone likes to buy what he sees others are buying. No one is interested in what everybody else is refusing. It is, therefore, important that a salesman have an air of prosperity. With him business should always be good. He should tell only of his successes and forget his failures. No one likes to be depressed by tales of woe. The prospective buyer upon hearing a tale of woe may from the goodness of his heart give the salesman encouragement, advice and sympathy, but he will withhold his order, and orders are what the salesman wants.

### Trained Men Wanted

The salesman is a permanent part of the business world and his position is becoming daily more important. As changing conditions are bringing a higher order of intelligence and discernment in the buying world, so it is necessary for the salesman to become better grounded in the principles of his calling, and to bring to that calling a higher stand-

ard of intelligence. The big demand at the present time is for five to ten thousand dollar a year salesmen. The more a salesman can make, the greater is the demand for his services. I predict that the time is soon coming when salesmanship will rank as a profession with law, medicine, engineering and accounting, and I believe the big incomes will be made, as in other professions, by the trained men.







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